

wanted to get in: one, reimport the prescriptions from Canada, drop the price in the United States of America and allow a free market competition; and, two, ask the Secretary of HHS to buy in bulk on behalf of the Medicare recipients, again dropping the prices. But the increased amounts of campaign contributions to this body has led to both of those provisions being absent.

The thing that Democrats are most offended about is not the cost. It is about the deceit. We were told \$400 billion this program would cost. Actuaries were told not to release the real figures to Congress, and the real figures ended up being \$140 billion more. That is the shame, and that is the sham.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 444, BACK TO WORK INCENTIVE ACT OF 2003

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 656, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 656

Resolved, That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 444) to amend the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to establish a Personal Reemployment Accounts grant program to assist Americans in returning to work. The bill shall be considered as read for amendment. In lieu of the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Education and the Workforce now printed in the bill, an amendment in the nature of a substitute consisting of the text of H.R. 444 shall be considered as adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill, as amended, to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) one hour of debate on the bill, as amended, equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce; and (2) one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. (a) In the engrossment of H.R. 444, the Clerk shall—

(1) await the disposition of H.R. 4409 and H.R. 4410;

(2) add the respective texts of such bills specified in subparagraph (1) as have passed the House, as new matter at the end of H.R. 444;

(3) conform the title of H.R. 444 to reflect the addition to the engrossment of the text of such bills specified in subparagraph (1) as have passed the House;

(4) assign appropriate designations to provisions within the engrossment; and

(5) conform provisions for short titles within the engrossment.

(b) Upon the addition to the engrossment of H.R. 444 of the text of each bill specified in subsection (a)(1) that has passed the House, each such bill shall be laid on the table.

(c) If H.R. 444 is disposed of without reaching the stage of engrossment as contemplated in subsection (a), the bill specified in subsection (a)(1) that first passes the House shall be treated in the manner specified for H.R. 444 in subsections (a) and (b), and only the other bill specified in subsection (a)(1) that has passed the House shall be laid on the table.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHAW). The gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 656 provides for 1 hour of debate in the House, equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce. It also provides for an amendment in the nature of a substitute consisting of the text of H.R. 444 shall be considered as adopted.

Section 2 of the resolution provides that in the engrossment of H.R. 444 the clerk shall add the text of H.R. 4409 and H.R. 4410 as passed by the House.

Finally, the resolution provides one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

Mr. Speaker, 8 years ago, many of us stood in this very Chamber and passed one of the most sweeping policy reforms Congress has ever undertaken reforming our Nation's welfare system. We took a risk that day in 1996 in order to change a failing system that encouraged dependency and discouraged self-sufficiency.

The tangible results are clear. Since 1996, we have seen welfare rolls plummet from 14 million to 5 million. Thousands who for years found themselves trapped in a cycle of poverty today are holding down meaningful jobs, getting promoted, and saving for their child's education. It is time to be bold once again.

For the past several years, the tax policy we have enacted has created over 1 million jobs in the past 8 months, over half of those in the last 2 months alone. The economy grew more in the last 6 months of last year than it had in the previous 2 decades. That is remarkable growth, Mr. Speaker. But still more must be done. There are still many Americans out of work seeking meaningful jobs and rewarding careers.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that when we enact legislation that removes the roadblocks to progress, progress is achieved; when we eradicate programs which foster dependency, we foster independence; and when we create an atmosphere where workers can attain the knowledge and skills to build strong and successful careers, then we empower those seeking a job with the ability to find one.

That is precisely what this plan will do by creating personal reemployment accounts. These new accounts offer an innovative approach to provide unemployed workers with the very tools they need to get back onto their feet and into a lifelong career. These accounts are designed to provide unemployed Americans additional flexi-

bility, greater choice and more control over their employment search and to provide a reemployment bonus for those who find a job quickly.

Under this plan, an individual who is receiving unemployment benefits can access a personal reemployment account of up to \$3,000. The personal reemployment accounts will be administered through the one-stop career centers. These centers are already offering assistance to those seeking employment. At these centers, people can use their personal reemployment account for up to 1 year for intensive services like unemployment counseling, case management and job training. Supportive services like child care, transportation, and housing assistance are also available. One-stop career centers are the embodiment of compassion for those who have lost their jobs due to no fault of their own.

In the ever-changing, dynamic global economy that we live in, it is natural that some businesses are going to downsize, fold up or restructure, resulting in the laying off of workers. Most of these employees are honest, hard-working people. They want to get back to work, they want to earn their paycheck, and they want to support their families.

In addition to extending a helping hand to those seeking a job, this plan prevents fraud and waste as well, which is important to the program's participants as well as to American taxpayers. Currently, individuals out of work are able to take advantage of the one-stop career centers for free. Now they will be encouraged to shop wisely, paying for those services that they truly need out of the funds in their new accounts. This prevents double-dipping and ensures that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely, effectively and efficiently.

But perhaps the best part of this reward-based plan is that individuals who access a personal reemployment account and find employment within 13 weeks will be able to keep the remaining balance as a cash reemployment bonus. They will get 60 percent of the balance at the time they are employed and 40 percent 6 months later if they are still in the job.

Mr. Speaker, this is a common-sense, innovative plan that will empower Americans to find new jobs. It is a plan that will provide out-of-work Americans with access to the resources they truly need: job training, child care, transportation services, or housing assistance, whatever that need might be for that particular individual; and it is a plan that reflects the Republican agenda of creating jobs and getting Americans back to work. I urge my colleagues to support this rule and the underlying legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Ms. SLAUGHTER asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) for yielding me the customary 30 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I am troubled by recent actions taken by the Committee on Rules and the possible consequences for this democratic body. Otto van Bismarck said, "Laws are like sausages. It is better not to see them being made." Republicans on the Committee on Rules have devised and employed new "sausage-making" rules over the past several weeks. These rules take several bills, grind them up, and shove them into a new legislative casing and make a new bill.

H. Res. 638 provided for the consideration of three bills under the same closed rule, restricting the amount of time for floor debate and deliberation. Once the bills were passed, the rule required the bills be ground and repackaged as one bill.

H. Res. 645 provided for the consideration of five bills, again limiting the time for floor debate. Once the bills were considered and passed, the text of all five pieces of legislation were ground together to make one large bill to send to the other body. I would think that the parliamentarians of the House of Representatives would take some interest in what is going on here.

Today we are faced with a new device, a Frankenstein rule. Last night, the Republicans cobbled together bad pieces of rules, concocted a few other pieces, and then passed everything as one big monster rule.

The text of H.R. 444 is replaced with the text of H.R. 4444. None of the four amendments before the committee is in order, debate on the legislation is limited to 1 hour, and, outrageously, the rule appends the text of two unrelated bills, bills not considered by the Committee on Rules, just simply written in.

H.R. 4409 is on the suspension calendar, which would reauthorize title II of the Higher Education Act of 1965. H.R. 4410 is the Teacher Shortage Act of 2004, which would increase the amount of student loans which may be forgiven for highly qualified teachers in math, science, and special education. Now the merits of these legislative appendages have not even been considered by the Committee on Education and the Workforce, having held no hearings on it. And last night the Committee on Rules did not hear any testimony on either one of them.

When the rule was passed out, a staffer gave us a copy of the bills. We discovered whichever one of those two suspensions passes first will be cobbled into this bill we are doing today. The other one, I do not know what happens to it. I think it is tabled and forgotten about.

Mr. Speaker, it is destructive to us because we have no rules to go by any more. It does not matter what they

want to do. Somewhere in the Capitol, people are devising byzantine and awful rules to shove down Members' throats.

This bill today, though, is really only a feel-good bill. There is no money authorized for it. It does nothing for the 1.2 million people who are unemployed and have lost their benefits.

Mr. Speaker, 8.2 million Americans are unemployed; and the unemployment rate remains the same. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, since December, 2003, the unemployment rate has been 5.6 or 5.7; and extended unemployment benefits expired last year. However, the unemployment trust fund has \$20 billion in it. Congress simply refuses to allow the unemployed to tap into that money which is already there. Every dollar spent on unemployment benefits immediately creates more than \$2 in economic growth.

Instead of using the billions of dollars that are already there untouched in the unemployment trust fund, this underlying bill creates a pilot program for personal reemployment accounts. The goal is to help people get back to work to provide \$3,000 for job training, transportation and job search expenses. The fact that there is only one job for every three seekers is not considered here. The problem is it does nothing to create jobs. It trains people for jobs that do not exist, jobs which have been outsourced overseas. According to the Economic Policy Institute, these PRAs are a response to a problem that does not exist. The concept assumes there are plenty of jobs, but the unemployed workers are so comfortable getting \$250 a week in unemployment benefits that they will not go back to work. So the problem is the failure of job creation, and these PRAs will be of no help. It is insulting to workers to believe they have to be given a grant to go look for work.

□ 1045

As I said before, over 1.5 million Americans exhausted their benefits, and they will not be eligible for this pilot program. If a person uses this PRA, he or she is no longer eligible to receive the benefits of other programs under the Workforce Investment Act, which can be worth as much as \$10,000. Any money used from PRAs will be money used from WIA funds, because additional funds are not authorized for this program. Let me say that again. This wonderful program here to put people back to work has no money authorized for it.

Why are we not considering real help for the unemployed? This body should be passing legislation to extend unemployment benefits. I urge my colleagues to vote against this Frankenstein rule, so the House can act to help the millions of unemployed Americans and their families.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 2 minutes to

the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HAYES).

(Mr. HAYES asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, I first want to thank the gentlewoman from Ohio for yielding me time and then to thank the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. PORTER) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER) for bringing forth this very effective effort to help create jobs and grow our economy.

Every day I work to create jobs in the Eighth District of North Carolina. This is another in a long list of aggressive actions taken by this majority to work with people on both sides of the aisle for national security and economic security, which go hand in hand.

The Workforce Investment Act and the Personal Reemployment Accounts again are an effort in a long list of efforts by our majority to put people back to work, to create jobs, and to match job seekers with good employment opportunities.

Personal Reemployment Accounts will allow flexibility. They will create opportunities for people to get transportation, counseling, child care, relocation assets, whatever they need to become employed gainfully with good jobs paying good wages as quickly as possible. These are several of the reasons that I strongly rise in support of this rule and the underlying legislation.

Unemployment benefits are important, and I support them; but there is far more to our effort to create jobs and put people back to work than simply unemployment benefits. This is a step in the right direction. It gives us additional opportunities to help people get good jobs, to grow this economy, and to continue to fight and win the war on terrorism.

As we look every day at things that we are doing, this is one of the best and most effective ways that we can create jobs, strengthen our economy and help our people create the careers that they need to support their families.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I thank the leadership for bringing this forward, and I ask for strong support for the rule and the bill.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE).

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I also rise in opposition to this closed rule and urge Members to defeat the previous question. This rule cuts off meaningful debate on real-world solutions to the real-world problems of American workers.

The underlying bill creates an unproven and risky job-training voucher program that does not address the main issues facing American workers. American workers need help now. Those who exhausted their unemployment benefits need Congress and the Bush administration to enact an extension of those benefits. The American

worker also needs new job opportunities.

Under this administration, 2 million jobs have been lost, 8.2 million individuals are unemployed, 1.5 million workers have exhausted their unemployment benefits, and wages have barely kept up with inflation. This bill does nothing to address these problems.

The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) and I filed amendments to respond to the true needs of American workers. The Committee on Rules blocked both of these amendments.

When I go to the Committee on Rules recently, I am reminded of what Dante had engraved above the gates of Hell in his "Inferno." Engraved there was: "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here." I have not been given an amendment up there, by the present committee and I have been here quite a few years.

The amendment to be offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) would have allowed local communities to hire and train first responders. This amendment would have created jobs, while also protecting our villages and towns from security threats. My amendment would have extended unemployment benefits for those who have exhausted their initial 26 weeks.

Both of these amendments are critically needed if we are to ensure that American families can provide for their own financial security. I urge Members to defeat the previous question so we can have a full and open debate on the Ryan amendment. If the previous question is not defeated, I urge opposition to this rule.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. PORTER), the author of this very important legislation.

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the rule for H.R. 444.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of this legislation because it impacts the families and children of Nevadans, but also those families across the country. But Nevada-specific, right after 9/11, we experienced almost 100,000 people that were laid off in a short period of time. What we have learned since then is with the resilient business community working with this Congress and its leadership on getting people back to work, we are now back to about 4.3 percent unemployment.

Nevada is a bellwether for the economy and how strong it is becoming, because people are coming back to Nevada in droves. But, more importantly, what we learned in that tragic time right after 9/11 is that we can no longer do business as usual when it comes to unemployment. We need to find a flexible way to approach these families to help them get back to work.

This program provides for flexibility. More importantly, it is voluntary. Families can use this for many uses, from transportation for getting to the job, maybe even for those families that need a telephone to be put in their home. Maybe they need to learn a new

language. Nevada is one of the fastest growing States in the country. With 5,000, 6,000 or 7,000 new people a month, it has one of the fastest growing Hispanic populations in the country. This program can be used to help train and help these families adjust.

Mr. Speaker, this language, as I said earlier, is voluntary. Each State can make a decision. It is a pilot program. States can choose. Why not allow these families to use this program?

I have heard our colleagues across the aisle say that these families and individuals do not need more training. I am sorry, I disagree. They need a new approach to unemployment, they need additional benefits, and they need additional help; and I encourage everyone to support the rule and H.R. 444.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN).

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from New York for yielding me time, and I also thank the gentlewoman from the Buckeye State for her comments as well.

I am rising here, Mr. Speaker, to urge a "no" vote on the previous question. As the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) said, there are several amendments here that we wanted to get in to this that were not allowed.

One of the amendments obviously offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) was to extend unemployment benefits. We have thousands of workers in the State of Ohio who have exhausted their unemployment benefits and need help. These are people who are locked out, these are people who are unemployed, these are people who cannot afford to go back to a job that pays \$6 an hour. We hear a lot about job creation, but the jobs that we are losing are \$20 an hour with health care benefits. The jobs we are gaining are \$6 an hour at Wal-Mart.

One of the amendments, the Ryan amendment, would request an authorization of such sums as necessary from 2004 to 2009 for on-the-job training opportunities for medical and safety occupations, police, firefighters, rescue personnel, paramedics, medical personnel. This money would go to the Governors. The Governors would be able to use 75 percent of it in a formula based on population, based on the need as well, with 20 percent of the money being discretionary, to go for first responders.

This would be an economic stimulus for local communities in many places like the State of Ohio that could use this economic stimulus. Many of the cities, municipalities, townships, and counties would be able to take this money, use it for training and be able to hire more and, therefore, provide a direct economic stimulus.

There is also another debate I think that is going on here, and I think it is a debate that the American people need to hear and need to participate in. Basically, after 9/11 there were two philosophies. One we are exercising now

with the war in Iraq, over \$200 billion being spent over there.

But there was another philosophy that did not get much hearing. There is also another idea that we had here, and that was take some of those billions of dollars that we have been spending in Iraq and invest that to batten down the hatches in the United States of America. More money for first responders, police, fire, Border Patrol; more money into the intelligence community; hire people who speak Farsi that can infiltrate some of these camps. I think it becomes a choice between hiring police, fire and military personnel in Iraq, or hiring police, fire and medical personnel here in the United States of America.

I think this would have been an opportunity for us to provide a direct economic stimulus and change course a little bit by investing here and protecting the civil defense, the homeland security. I think that would have been a better way to go.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK), my dear friend and colleague from the Committee on Rules.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Ohio for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of not only this rule but the underlying bill, because as the economy continues to improve, it is important that we as Congress continue to help to provide incentives for those Americans who are still looking for work.

I spend the majority of my time in my district working on economic development and job creation. This is the Ninth District of North Carolina, and providing worker re-employment accounts is a phenomenal tool that the folks in our district and, of course, all across the country can use to help them get back to work.

As we have already heard this morning, these accounts are flexible, and that is the key. Flexibility is so important, because the workers can use the money for career counseling, for transportation, child care, job training, or housing assistance. Wherever the need may be, they can use that money. If they find employment within 13 weeks, they get to keep the balance of the account as a bonus.

It is important to the American people to know that we have not lost sight of the fact that there are still a lot of them out there looking for work and that times have been tough. We have been hit particularly hard in my district because of all of the textile jobs lost over the last few years. So it is very important, again, for my district, for the State of North Carolina, and other areas that are experiencing the same problems that we pass this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on this rule and "yes" on the underlying bill.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS).

(Mr. ANDREWS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from New York for yielding me time, and I rise in opposition to this rule.

Over the last several years, we have lost 2 million jobs in the country. Over the last several weeks, we have heard that there are new and grave terrorist threats to our trains and a number of individuals are free in the country threatening to blow up buildings and do other acts of terror.

The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) has an excellent idea that addresses each of those two problems. His idea is that we authorize enough money so that we could train and recruit and hire 100,000 first responders to be deployed in our cities and our States and our communities across the country. We would be stronger at home against the terrorist threat, and we would put 100,000 people to work in the process in skilled jobs with good benefits.

Now, I think this is an excellent idea. But what is wrong about what the House is doing today is we are not even going to get to debate this idea or discuss it or vote on it. The majority has put forth a plan that they say will help the unemployed. I emphatically disagree that it will, but it is their right to bring that plan forward. It should be our right as the minority to bring our plan forward.

The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) has an excellent plan. If you vote against the previous question, you will give us the chance to debate and vote on the very excellent plan offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN). I would urge a "no" vote on the previous question for that reason.

□ 1100

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER).

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time, and I rise in opposition to this closed rule to deny a fair and open debate on the real needs of American workers.

Once again we see the Republican leadership shutting down the ability of the House for Members to debate and offer amendments to change the course of lives of American workers, to alter the legislation that comes before us that is really nothing more than a sham. It is a fig leaf to try to present to the American people that somehow the Republican majority cares about the unemployment when, in fact, what we see is we have 8.2 million people unemployed, we have 1.5 million workers who have exhausted their unemployment benefits, people that no longer have the economic resources to hold their families together because they have been unemployed over 26 weeks. Those people are out there.

Speaker after speaker on the other side of the aisle has gotten up and la-

mented the level of unemployment in their district, and yet they refuse, they refuse to allow this Congress to address extending unemployment benefits to those people who they admit cannot find jobs in their district because of the economy, because of the layoffs, but they are going to let those individuals crash to the floor, lose their homes, lose their automobiles, make their chances of getting unemployment even more difficult because they refuse to bring up a bill to extend unemployment benefits. That is what the Republicans are offering.

What are they saying here? They want to offer a bill that says you may get up to \$3,000. Well, one of the things we just learned in the most recent memo from the White House is they plan to cut all of these programs in the next budget year, and so this promise is not worth the paper that it is written on. It is up to \$3,000. You may not get \$3,000. You may get \$1,000. It may not pay for the job searches that you are doing or the training that you need. But the Republicans want to suggest for those 8 million unemployed out there, for those 1.5 million workers who have exhausted their benefits, for the 2 million people who lost their jobs since President Bush took office, that somehow this legislation is going to deal with their problems. This legislation in no way deals with their problems.

The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) went to the Committee on Rules, and of course they were shut out. Because the Republicans are afraid of debate on unemployment, Republicans are afraid of debate on the homeland security and the employment of first responders to deal with the needs of this country. So what do they do? Rather than honor the tradition of the Constitution, rather than honor the traditions of this institution, they just close down the debate: Take this bill or leave it.

Well, this Congress ought to leave this bill, because it does not do anything for the unemployed, and it certainly does not help those people who are most desperate in our country, who have found themselves long-term unemployed and their benefits have run out. This is the first administration in decades that has refused to help those individuals who have exhausted their unemployment benefits.

It is unfortunate that we are in this situation. We should be able to consider the Kildee amendment on unemployment benefits, we should be able to consider the Ryan amendment to hire first responders to deal with the security needs of this Nation, but this Republican majority will not allow that. I would urge people to vote against the previous question so we would have an opportunity to vote on the Ryan amendment and do something for this country, for the unemployed, and for the security needs of this country.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY).

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely important that we improve our current unemployment system, but not this way, not taking away from it, not with this legislation that falls far short of what we need in this country. We can do better. Why are we not? Because we refuse to bring the subject to the House Floor to discuss it. That is why I urge my colleagues to join me in opposing this closed rule and the underlying legislation.

Mr. Speaker, it is about time we address unemployment, and the Back to Work Incentive Act does not do anything but offer a temporary solution for a limited pool of unemployed workers, and it is a very poor solution to an ongoing problem. Personal reemployment accounts will not substitute for the lack of across-the-board investments in the Workforce Investment Act and the Unemployment Insurance Act. Improving the resources in these programs could help a broader number of workers stabilize their lives, could help develop the necessary skills that they need to secure new jobs. And I want to remind all of my colleagues that if we would invest in our Nation's transportation infrastructure, we would be providing jobs that pay a livable wage and we would be leaving with our communities infrastructure projects that they desperately need.

Actually, I am also concerned that this bill is an effort to make unemployment benefits the sole responsibility of the States and that it will eventually lead to the end of Federal unemployment programs. The cap on funds through the PRA system also alarms me. While it sounds great to give unemployed workers up to \$3,000, "up to," those are the operative words, this cap is far less than most workers already receive with unemployment extensions, leaving them without the funds they need when they are in the most desperate situation.

Vote no on this rule and no on the underlying bill.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE).

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentlewoman from New York for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, it would be nice to come on the floor of the House and celebrate legislation that provides a cash sum to alleged unemployed individuals, that provides them with transportation dollars and cash money for child care and job training, and it really sounds like this is Christmas in June. But, frankly, Mr. Speaker, this does not answer the question of the chronically unemployed, it does not answer the question of those who need extended unemployment, and it certainly does not answer the question of people who are frustrated with the idea that there are no jobs.

We realize that, though the economy is percolating, this administration has not created jobs; and my complaint is, in a community like Houston, Texas, that has suffered under the unfortunate and bad circumstances of Enron where I had 2 years ago over 5,000 employees laid off, who still remain unemployed or under-employed, this is not a panacea. It would be very helpful if we would come together in a bipartisan manner and begin to look at the real unemployment problems of America. That means the constant and ongoing training for outsourcing jobs across the waters and, as well, not providing definitive unemployment benefits for those who are seeking employment.

For this job bill to suggest that people do not want to work is an absolute insult. Because Americans do want to work. They are producers, they are creators, they like to invest their time. What we need to do in this body is to really respond to those unemployed Americans by extending their unemployment benefits and not providing these cash handouts that will only go to a few.

Let me also say, coming from Houston, how tragic it is to realize that even though we thought we swept out the last of the last of Enron, what an enormous insult to wake up this morning and find tapes now that are suggesting that it was only a game and that it was all about Grandma Millie, and that is what the traders were doing.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope we would spend less time putting forward bills that do not help all jobless Americans and begin to sweep out the bad apples in corporate America and begin to insist on the creation of jobs and also to pay the unemployment benefits of the thousands and millions of Americans who get up every morning and really want a job. That is what this Congress should be doing, and I would ask my colleagues to realize that that is what we need to be doing today.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to my last speaker, my colleague, the gentleman from the great Buckeye State of Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER), the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the gentlewoman from Ohio, for yielding me this time.

Tomorrow, we will consider a bill that is integral to helping return more Americans to work, the Worker Reemployment Accounts Act. As President Bush has said, one American without a job is one too many. This legislation provides a unique approach to helping displaced workers return to good jobs. The bill offers new assistance for unemployed workers in the form of personal reemployment accounts which would help workers who need it the most return to work more quickly.

The Worker Reemployment Account Act is one piece of a larger effort to solidify the future competitiveness of

America's workforce by improving education and job training. Later today, we will consider two bills aimed at strengthening teacher training and increasing the availability of highly qualified teachers in high-demand subject areas. These bills, which will be packaged with the Worker Reemployment Accounts Act under this rule, represent a comprehensive strategy for strengthening education at all levels and improving job training.

With 1.1 million new jobs created over the last 8 months and 625,000 net new jobs added just in March and April, it is clear that our resurgent economy is moving on the right track. Indeed, almost every economic indicator tells us the economy is adding momentum every month, and manufacturing jobs have been on the rise for 3 straight months as well. The unemployment rate fell to 5.6 percent in April, lower than the average unemployment rate during the 1970s, 1980s, and the 1990s.

Despite these encouraging signs, we need to do more to help displaced workers get back on their feet, and it is clear that job training and worker education is more important in today's changing economy than ever before. We want to give workers a hand up, not just a handout. Self-sufficiency and independence from Government is every American worker's goal, not dependency and endless reliance on our government. We recognize this fact, and personal reemployment accounts represent one more way we are helping the unemployed get back on their feet through personalized job training and employment services specifically tailored to meet that person's own needs.

The Worker Reemployment Accounts Act is an innovative approach to helping workers find good-paying jobs. The bill authorizes funding for a pilot project similar to the one proposed by President Bush earlier this year that would provide workers with personal reemployment accounts up to \$3,000 to purchase employment-related services to help them find a good job. The bill does not authorize a specific dollar amount for the pilot program but simply makes reemployment accounts an allowable use of funds under the demonstration programs of the Workforce Investment Act. The President requested \$50 million for this demonstration program, and I am sure Congress would fund it appropriately.

This is an efficient and flexible approach that empowers Americans to find good-paying jobs. The funds from these accounts can be used for a variety of employment-related services, including job training, career counseling, transportation assistance, child care, and housing assistance.

One of the best elements of the plan is that any unspent balance in the account can be kept by workers who find work within 13 weeks of being laid off. Workers can keep any remaining amount as a reemployment bonus.

The personal reemployment accounts will be administered through the One-

Stop Career System established under the Workforce Investment Act where displaced workers already seek employment assistance. States and local workforce boards that want to participate can apply to the Labor Secretary for competitive grants to offer reemployment accounts to unemployed workers. An individual who receives an amount must be receiving unemployment benefits, be identified by the State as likely to exhaust his or her benefits, and be eligible for at least 20 weeks of unemployment compensation.

These accounts are a new benefit option that would work in tandem with unemployment insurance as an additional vehicle to help workers in their efforts to find good-paying jobs. Over the past 2 years, we have taken numerous steps to help unemployed workers, and this is another way we are responding to the needs of Americans who find themselves without work.

As I stated earlier, the U.S. economy is strong and getting stronger. Personal reemployment accounts are yet another important step to help these displaced workers find the jobs that they seek. By giving job-seekers all the resources they need to return to work, we will continue this economic resurgence and help every unemployed American secure the education and skills necessary to take advantage of today's reenergized job market. That is what this debate is all about. Let us not let the perfect become the enemy of the good. Let us support the rule and the underlying bill.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot of rhetoric today about how the economy is on the upswing and how it has improved and how jobs are beginning to return. But I can tell my colleagues that people in my hometown and communities across America remain unemployed. There are 8.2 million people out of work in this country, and there is now only one job opening for every three unemployed individuals. No matter how you spin it, the bill before us today will not do a single thing to create more jobs.

That is why I urge Members to join me in defeating the previous question. If the previous question is defeated, I will offer an amendment to the rule making in order an amendment that was not accepted by the Committee on Rules by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) to train 100,000 new first responders.

□ 1115

That is 100,000 new policemen, firemen, emergency response personnel, medical personnel, and scores of other citizens who keep this country safe every day and would, of course, create jobs.

I offered this amendment in the Committee on Rules last night; but as is usual practice these days, it was defeated on a straight party-line vote.

Now, this bill is supposed to be about helping the unemployed. Well, I can tell my colleagues if they really want to help them, they will do everything they can to find ways to create new good-paying jobs. And that is what the Ryan amendment will do. So I urge my colleagues to vote today in favor of job creation, in favor of protecting our communities by voting "no" on the previous question.

Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker. A "no" vote will not prevent us from considering the bill before us today, but by voting "yes," Members will be denying this House a chance to create 100,000 new jobs for unemployed Americans.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the amendment be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD immediately before the vote.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHAW). Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New York?

There was no objection.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I urge Members to vote "no" on the previous question.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, today we are discussing real issues that have real impacts on real families all across this country, whether in my district of Columbus, Ohio, or in any of the other 434 districts my colleagues represent in this body. Americans want to work. They want to provide for their families and themselves. They want to take responsibility for their decisions.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that most of the time when someone loses his or her job it is for reasons beyond their control. As we strive to reach the day when all Americans hold down good jobs, the reality is, as it always has been, some people will be out of work on any given day. So until we reach that day, let us give our friends and neighbors who are unemployed the tools and resources they need to make their own decisions about how best they can find work which suits them. Whether that means using their personal reemployment account for a daycare while they are interviewing, or transportation to that interview, or for a computer training class, whatever they believe they need, let us allow them to have it.

The key here is flexibility, giving the people the power to make choices that best reflect their own situations. The result will be getting people back to work at good-paying jobs, to begin rewarding lifelong careers.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MS. PRYCE OF OHIO

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I offer an amendment to the rule to fix a technical error.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment offered by Ms. PRYCE of Ohio: In section 2(a)(1), strike "4410" and insert "4411".

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this rule, the amendment, and the underlying resolution.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this rule, and thank my friend and colleague from the Rules committee, Ms. PRYCE, for yielding me this time.

I support passage of H. Res. 656, which is a closed rule, and urge my colleagues in the House to join me in doing so. The Rules Committee received a couple of amendments to H.R. 444, but a rule of this nature was needed in order to allow the House to work its will on H.R. 444, without getting into a number of issues unrelated to the goals of helping displaced workers return to good jobs.

I want to commend Mr. PORTER of Nevada for his effort in bringing H.R. 444, the underlying legislation, to the House floor. This bill provides for the creation of personal reemployment accounts, allotting \$3,000 to help unemployed individuals find new jobs. This is a new approach to reducing unemployment, and it allows individuals to have more control over their job search.

Those unemployed individuals who are eligible for these reemployment accounts may use the money toward job training, child care, transportation, or other programs that would assist them in returning to work.

Additionally, under H.R. 444, if an individual finds employment before the 13th week of benefits, he may keep the left-over money for his personal use. Therefore, it creates an additional incentive for unemployed individuals to find work quickly.

This is another part of our plan to help workers find good jobs. This Congress understood that by reducing the tax burden and improving economic incentives, we could boost economic growth and increase the flow of resources into production. That occurred by following the implementation of the Republican tax relief plan. By reducing the tax burden on small businesses and families, we are creating more economic activity which means more jobs for all Americans. Today, we are taking another step to help unemployed workers, and this bill will give those seeking a job another resource to assist their efforts.

H.R. 444, is not a "hand-out" for our Nation's unemployed; instead, it offers them a "hand-up." By giving individuals more control of their job search, they have the opportunity to become self-reliant. For these reasons, it's very important that we pass H.R. 444 today.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this rule so that we may proceed to debate the underlying legislation.

The material previously referred to by Ms. SLAUGHTER is as follows:

PREVIOUS QUESTION FOR H. RES. 656 RULE FOR H.R. 444—THE BACK TO WORK INCENTIVE ACT OF 2003

In the resolution, insert after "and (2)" the following and renumber "(2)" as "(3)":

"(2) the amendment in the nature of a substitute specified in Section 3 of this resolution if offered by Representative Ryan of Ohio or a designee, which shall be in order without intervention of any point of order, shall be considered as read, and shall be separately debatable for 60 minutes equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent; and (3)"

At the end of the resolution add the following:

SEC. 3. The amendment referred to in (2) is as follows:

AMENDMENT TO H.R. 444

OFFERED BY MR. RYAN OF OHIO

First responders grant program

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "First Responders Grant Program Act".

SEC. 2. FIRST RESPONDERS GRANT PROGRAM.

Subtitle B of title I of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (29 U.S.C. 2811 et seq.) is amended by inserting after chapter 5 the following new chapter:

"CHAPTER 5A—FIRST RESPONDERS GRANT PROGRAM

"SEC. 135A. GRANTS TO STATES.

"(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall allot the amount appropriated under section 135D to the States, on the basis of a State's population relative to the population of all States, to be allocated by the Governor pursuant to section 135B.

"(b) SMALL STATE MINIMUM ALLOTMENT.—The Secretary shall ensure that no State shall receive an allotment under this section that is less than 1/2 of 1 percent of the amount appropriated under section 137(c).

"SEC. 135B. WITHIN STATE ALLOCATIONS.

"(a) IN GENERAL.—After reserving from the amounts allocated under section 135A amounts for administrative costs under subsection (d), of the remainder—

"(1) 75 percent of such amounts shall be allocated by the Governor to local areas in accordance with subsection (b); and

"(2) 20 percent of such amounts shall be reserved by the Governor for allocation to local areas in accordance with subsection (c).

"(b) ALLOCATION TO COUNTIES.—Of the amounts described in subsection (a)(1), the Governor of a State shall allocate to the counties of such State, on the basis of a county's population relative to the population of all counties within such State, to be used to hire and train first responders pursuant to section 135C.

"(c) GOVERNORS' DISCRETIONARY ALLOCATIONS.—Of the amounts reserved pursuant to subsection (a)(2), the Governor of a State may allocate amounts to local governments (including county and city governments) determined by the Governor to have the greatest need for such amounts to hire and train first responders pursuant to section 135C.

"(d) ADMINISTRATION.—Not more than 5 percent of the amount allotted to a State under section 135A may be used by the Governor for administrative costs in carrying out this chapter.

"SEC. 135C. USE OF FUNDS.

"Counties (and other local governments where applicable) receiving funds under this chapter may use such funds, consistent with section 134(d)(4)(D)(ii), to hire and train individuals to become first responders, such as firefighters, police and emergency response personnel, and medical personnel, if such individuals—

"(1) are likely to exhaust regular unemployment compensation and are in need of job search assistance to make a successful transition to new employment;

"(2) are receiving regular unemployment compensation under any Federal or State unemployment program administered by the State; and

"(3) are eligible for not less than 20 weeks of regular unemployment compensation.

"SEC. 135D. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

"There is authorized to be appropriated for fiscal years 2004 through 2009 such sums as may be necessary to carry out this chapter."

Amend the title so as to read: "A bill to amend the Workforce Investment Act of 1998

to establish a First Responders Grant Program to ensure adequate funding to increase the number of first responders in the Nation."

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the amendment and on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on ordering the previous question on the amendment and on the resolution.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.J. RES. 83, PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES REGARDING THE APPOINTMENT OF INDIVIDUALS TO FILL VACANCIES IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 657 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 657

Resolved, That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider in the House the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 83) proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States regarding the appointment of individuals to fill vacancies in the House of Representatives. The joint resolution shall be considered as read for amendment. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the joint resolution to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) 90 minutes of debate on the joint resolution equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on the Judiciary; and (2) one motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

(Mr. HASTINGS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 657 is a rule providing for the consideration of House Joint Resolution 83, a proposed amendment to the Constitution of the United States regarding appointment of individuals to fill vacancies in the House of Representatives.

The rule provides for 90 minutes of debate to be equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on the Judiciary. The rule also provides for one motion to recommit.

Mr. Speaker, on April 22 of this year, the House of Representatives debated and voted on H.R. 2844, the Continuity of Representation Act, which provides for the expedited special election of new Members to fill seats left vacant due to extraordinary circumstances.

Such circumstances would be deemed to exist when the Speaker of the House announces that vacancies in the House exceed 100 members. The special elections would be required to be held within 45 days. This bill passed the House with a broad majority of 306 votes in favor to 97 against.

At the foundation of the Continuity in Representation Act is the principle that Members of this House ought to be elected by the people. This principle has guided service in this institution since its inception. Indeed, the purpose of the House is to serve as a Chamber that is closest to the people; closest to the people due to the equal size of our constituencies; closest to the people due to the frequency of elections; and, most important, closest to the people because of the direct election by the people.

I support the Founding Fathers' view that Members of the House ought to be directly elected by the people and not selected for them.

This rule provides for consideration of an approach that would amend the Constitution and allow for immediate appointment within 7 days of replacements for Members due to the death or incapacity of a majority of the House's membership. The appointments would be made by the chief executives of the States where a vacancy exists from a list provided and maintained by the elected Member.

While I do not agree with changing the Constitution's requirements that Members of the House be directly elected, I do sincerely believe that our colleagues who do support this constitutional amendment deserve the opportunity to have their proposal voted upon by the House.

Mr. Speaker, following the tragic events of September 11, this House has a responsibility and duty to consider the fate of this institution should it become necessary to replace a significant number of Members due to a deadly terrorist attack.

Neither passage of the expedited elections bill nor consideration of H.J. Res. 83 alone serves as a comprehensive response to the continuity of this House in the face of deadly attack. For example, we must consider appropriate responses in the event that a large number of Members are incapacitated rather than killed. This is a potential scenario that cannot be ignored in a time of chemical, biological, and radiological weapons.

In order to act, the Constitution requires the House to achieve a quorum

of majority of all Members living and sworn. When a Member dies or resigns, the Speaker under the rules adjusts the quorum. However, the Framers never contemplated and made no provisions for the need to adjust the required quorum when large numbers of Members are still living but unable to carry out, temporarily or otherwise, the duties of the office to which they have been sworn. Under current law, if more than half of the House were to become incapacitated yet not deceased, the House could be unable to act at a time when the need to do so could hardly be greater.

On April 29, the House Committee on Rules held an original jurisdiction hearing on the incapacitation of Members. Under the leadership of the gentleman from California (Chairman DREIER), the Committee on Rules is approaching this important issue with the seriousness and thoughtfulness it deserves.

Mr. Speaker, while H.J. Res. 83 provides for the appointment of replacing representatives due to incapacity of elected Members, it does not offer an answer on how the House is to proceed on the question of defining or declaring incapacitation. These are important questions and the House must continue to deliberate seriously on their solutions.

I am committed to working to address this complex continuity issue, and I know that the gentleman from California (Chairman DREIER) and the gentleman from Wisconsin (Chairman SENSENBRENNER) will continue their personal involvement and leadership on this issue, as well as other committed colleagues on both sides of the aisle.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support the rule and continue the important consideration of how this House will operate should massive tragedy strike.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 6 minutes.

(Mr. MCGOVERN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS), for yielding me the customary 30 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, today the House is debating the continuity of Congress. We are attempting to answer important questions: What happens to the House of Representatives if a majority of Members are killed or incapacitated in a catastrophic event like a terrorist attack? How does the House continue to function if there are not enough Members to constitute a quorum?

These are not easy questions to answer. Indeed, they are not easy questions to talk about or to think about. Nobody wants to consider what happens if they and their friends and colleagues are attacked, but they are questions that we must face head on. And they are questions that elicit